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IN the early days of the eighteenth century " the toast of the town " was Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly of The Beggar's Opera who afterwards became the Duchess of Bolton.

The story goes that in a London tavern famed for the skill of its celebrated cook Tom Pierce, a party of gallants toasted Miss Fenton in wine drunk out of one of her shoes. But that was not the end of the shoe. In their zeal to honour the most popular actress of the day, the party consigned the shoe to Tom Pierce who subsequently produced it " exquisitely ragooed for their supper ! "

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The Sketch

No. 2663—Vol. CCV. WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1946 ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

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A GUEST WHOM WE DELIGHT TO HONOUR.

GENERAL EISENHOWER—affectionately and universally known as "Ike"—Supreme Commander of the Allied Armies in Europe in the war, used the flat in Culzean Castle, presented to him for life, as H.Q. for his Scottish visit. He and his wife and son, John, were guests of their Majesties at Balmoral on October 5. They dined with the Royal Family and attended a dance at the castle in the evening, the General partnering both Princesses. The next day they all went to church with the royal party, and left Balmoral in the afternoon. Scotland acclaimed the General with tremendous enthusiasm on all his many official appearances.

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# MOTLEY NOTES.

## By ALAN KEMP.

**Read, Mark, Learn.** At the age of 90 Mr. George Bernard Shaw can write an "occasional" article which any journalist, in the prime of life and at the height of his powers, would deeply envy. Of that quality was a recent lively article on the nineteenth-century drama. I detach a single sentence from it. It is more simple and convincing than many sentences which Mr. Shaw has written in his time. Every aspiring novelist and dramatist should mark it well and never lose sight of it (as, unfortunately, Mr. Shaw himself has often done). "The art of all fiction, whether made for the stage, the screen or the book-shelf, is the art of story-telling."

"... and that one's just to cover a stain on my tunic."

DRAWN BY STARKE.

### Fine-Spun Yarn.

How precious, and how rare, is a "rattling good story"! And a good story, as Mr. Shaw insists, is not just a good plot. It is a tale well told, and though plot may be important and is not to be treated by lesser men as scornfully as Mr. Shaw treats it, it is not the essence of the well-told tale. Recently, through force of circumstances, I have had more time than I could have wished for reading, especially fiction. I am not one of those who despise modern fiction and loftily maintain that we have "no giants" nowadays. I have read and reviewed far too much contemporary fiction not to have a very genuine respect for it. But how many of the stories one reads leave no memory behind! Of all the tales which one has read, how few can be remembered clearly even in the bare outlines of their story! The tale which really grips and lasts, both with character and event—that is indeed a possession-for-ever.

### Second Helping.

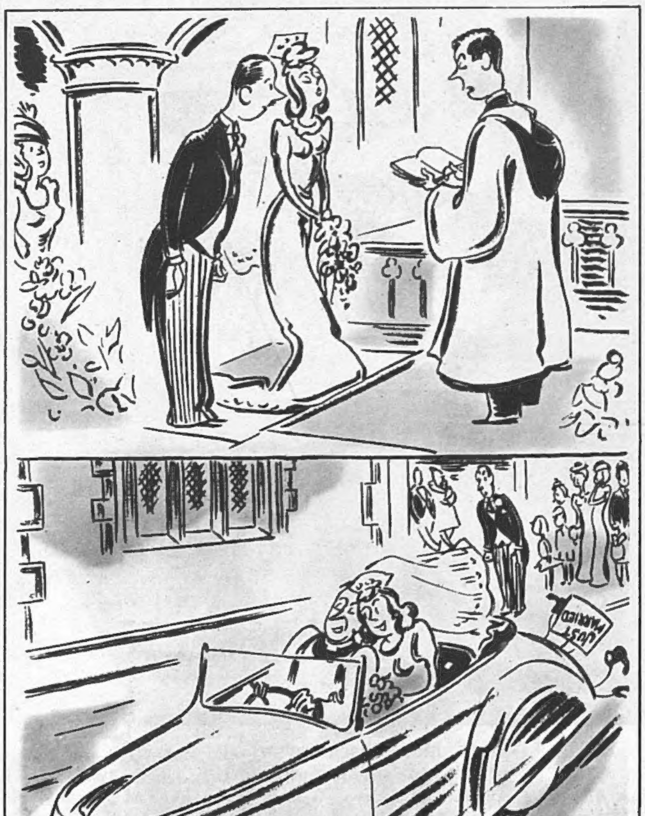
I think the test is re-reading; the great story-tellers are those to whom one comes back, to find their narratives fresh, and often fresher, in the re-telling. One ought really to re-read all the books which one first met in nonage, when one was incapable of any real critical judgment (not that one refrained from it!). Some people actually achieve this feat. I marvel at those who tell me casually that they have re-read Dickens or Thackeray this year for the fifth time. I have never been able to find the leisure for these re-perusals, and consequently my recollections of many of the "classics" which I read in my teens are very vague, and my opinions about them, I am sure, quite worthless. Nowadays I gather that all the enlightened come back again and again to Miss Austen and Mr. Trollope (they even have a Trollope magazine now!) I have to confess that I read both these authors with difficulty, not only the second time, but even the first time. I know that that opinion puts me beyond the intellectual pale, but I am far too old and hard-boiled a reader to pretend to enjoy books which I do not enjoy. I may read them with respect and interest and even admiration, but that is not the same thing as enjoying them.

"Nothing but patch . . . patch . . . patch."

DRAWN BY BARRY APPLEBY.

### "Its Loveliness Increases."

It is the tale which carries you along so that you *must* know what happens in the next chapter—that is the book that you treasure, or, at all events, that I treasure. (By the way, I deplore the passing of chapter-titles. It was always great fun looking through them and wondering what clues they provided.) In my re-reading, I find that there is one author who is always as good as he was before. He is R.L.S. I doubt whether any story in the language bears re-reading, or has in fact been so much re-read, as "Treasure Island." Even oftener have I re-read "The Wrecker," and every time I am more and more impressed by its immense superiority over the thrillers, expert though many of them are, which pour out nowadays. There are (to my mind) in all Stevenson's volumes very few exceptions to this delight in re-reading. When I come to more recent writers, I find that it is to Mr. Somerset Maugham's novels, and even more to his short stories, that I turn for the tale which bears re-telling. It surprises me not at all that at this late day there is a sort of Maugham revival. Of the good yarn it can be said, as Keats said of the Thing of Beauty, that it will never "pass into nothingness."



DRAWN BY PITTS.

### Earth-Gazing.

For all who have more blank time than they would wish, praised be fiction and the imaginings of man! But there is another way of beguiling blank time: it consists in just staring.

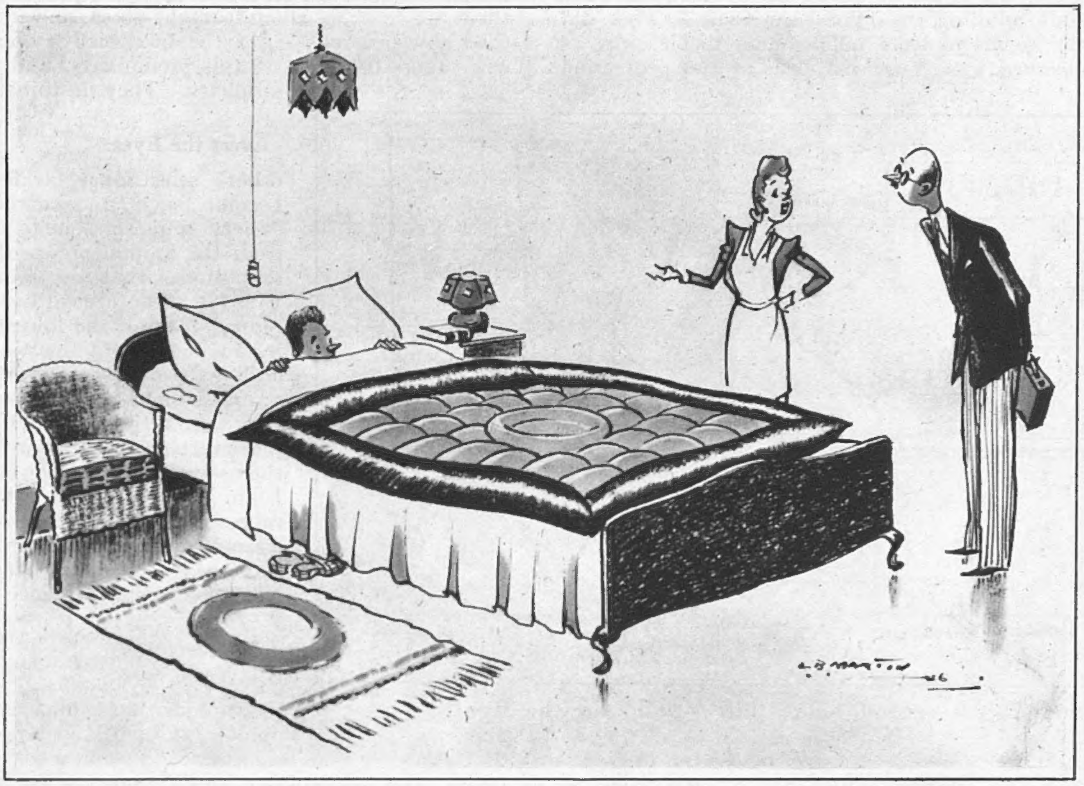
> A poor life, this, if, filled with care,
> We have no time to stand and stare—

and also to lie and stare, if we must be prone, as is the lot of all at some times. If the capricious English sun

will only come out (as it did all too late) and smile upon an English garden that is a great help to the staring game. We have all been told how gardens are *not* made, but there is a great deal to be said, maugre Kipling, for saying "Oh, how beautiful!" and lying, not in the shade, but in the sun. In such manner, anyhow, I have had intense and unfading pleasure from a single bed of salvias; and latterly I have learned a great deal, for hours together, about the way of a bee and a butterfly with a Michaelmas daisy. I will, however, spare you a dissertation on this aspect of natural history, instructive though you might find it.

### Quite Simple!

It cannot be concealed that there are in the world at present less attractive things, and less innocent things, than bees, butterflies, scarlet salvias and mauve Michaelmas daisies. Great statesmen have been commenting on them. Field-Marshal Smuts asks for a "new approach" to international problems, though he does not tell us how it is to be attained. Mr. Churchill sees no difficulty. "The process is simple. All that is needed is the resolve of hundreds of millions of men and women to do right instead of wrong and to gain as their reward blessing instead of cursing." And that process is "simple"! It is what all the philosophers, sages, saints and doctors have been asking of humanity since tongue could speak and pen could write, but none has yet persuaded humanity of the simplicity of a plan "to do right instead of wrong." I am free to confess that I sometimes find this rather difficult myself! Lately I have been following a somewhat tortuous path, led by Mr. Aldous Huxley, among the mystics of all ages. They don't seem to find this matter simple, either. And if they were to hear all this talk about "biological warfare," which is declared to be infinitely worse than atomic warfare, they would find it still less simple.



"Gee! I'll say the medicine was good! Four doses stopped his cough; three cured my neuritis; and the remainder cleaned all our silver."

DRAWN BY L. B. MARTIN.

"Things have come to a pretty pass, Major, when the egg-and-spoon race is won by a foreign egg!"

DRAWN BY SILLINCE.

### All Het Up.

Which reminds me that these new, hell-bent weapons seem to have absorbed far more public attention in the United States than anywhere else in the world. Ever since nuclear fission happened, the American public has been continuously "het up" about it. The atom is still first-class news in every publication, and the special atomic number of the "New Yorker" has been one of the all-time "sensations" of journalism. In the Old World we hear about these things every day, we receive the most solemn warnings about them, we realise their gravity—but we tend to shrug and pass on to the next item. The difference in attitude lies in history. The Old World for many centuries has lived on the slopes of the volcano; the lava and the ashes and the subterranean fires have overrun it again and again. The New World, for the first time, finds itself in actual, imminent danger of the horror. The American public is right to be "het up," and we shall be wrong if we become resigned. The only question is whether enough people in the world can become sufficiently "het up" to prevent the unimaginable from materialising.

### Uphill Work.

But, to revert to Mr. Churchill's admirable suggestion of being

[Continued overleaf.

and doing right rather than wrong, there are, of course, different ways in different countries of educating ourselves towards this desirable end. The Soviet authorities, for example, consider that there is much room for improvement in the cultural quality and effect of jazz, and are concerned about the " vulgarity and paucity of ideas " in music-hall material. " There is, it is asserted, too little material reflecting the mood in which the Soviet people are expected to set about fulfilling the Five Year Plan." Poor old Sherlock Holmes also seems to have fallen under displeasure, as being too much concerned with bourgeois ideas of the protection of private property. The censure is just, for if (as I seem to remember) Sherlock was totally uninterested in and ignorant of the solar system, I doubt whether he would have cared an ounce of shag about any Five Year Plan. It must be hard work being a comedian in Russia; but if M. Vishinsky would accept the numerous challenges sent him by Italian gentlemen of sensitive honour, that, surely, would provide an entertainment to which nobody could object. Myself, I should back M. Vishinsky every time—an observation which, very likely, will bring me a number of challenges from Italy. They are declined in advance.

" Children's Hour—second floor, third studio on the right."

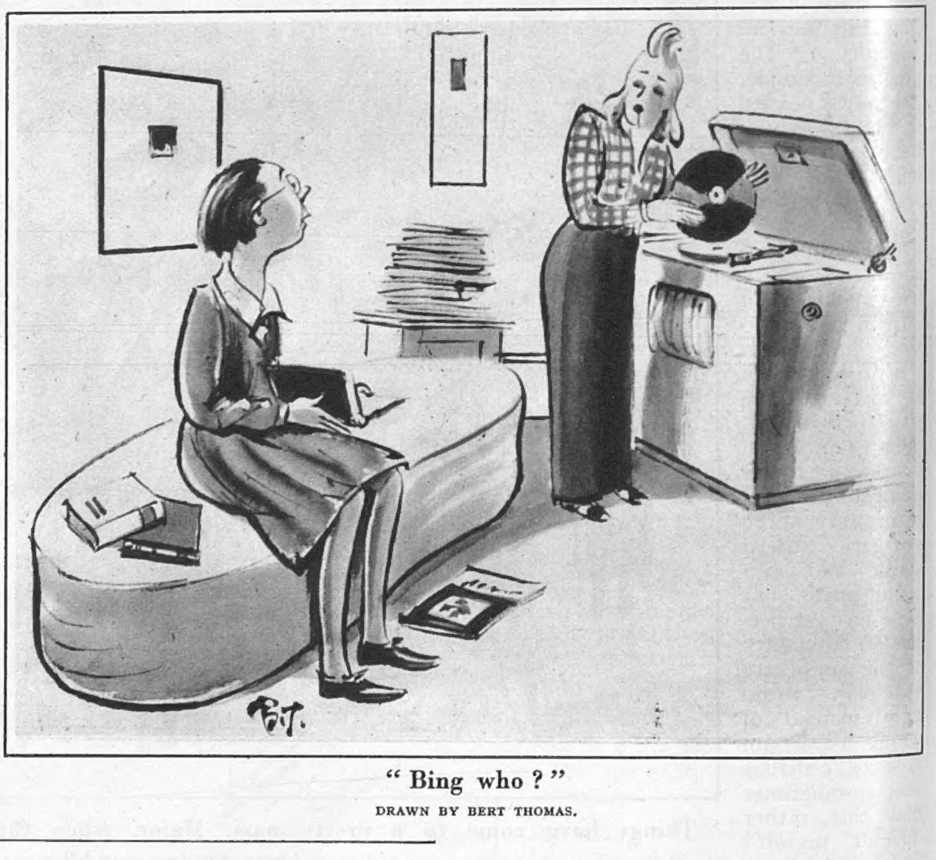
DRAWN BY HENRY STANDEN.

**Beautiful White Devil.** Bourgeois ideas of property are always bobbing up; for example, we have heard a great deal lately about diamonds. A recluse in a remote part of Africa has become one of the richest men in the world, according to bourgeois values, by finding a " pipe " of diamonds which out-Kimberleys Kimberley. Simultaneously, we hear of another jewel, ironically called " Hope," which continues to fulfil its curse generation after generation. Are there such things as fatal gems? I mentioned R.L.S. just now. Let me quote Prince Florizel. " 'To me this nugget of bright crystal is as loathsome as though it were crawling with the worms of death . . . I see it here in my hand, and I know it is shining with hell-fire. . . . For years and years it has faithfully served the powers of hell; enough, I say, of blood, enough of disgrace, enough of broken lives and friendships; . . . as for this diamond, God forgive me if I do wrong, but its empire ends to-night.' The Prince made a sudden movement with his hand, and the jewel, describing an arc of light, dived with a splash into the flowing river." And Prince Florizel was a shrewd man of the world. Perhaps it is as well that most of us do not happen to be tempted by such " nuggets of bright crystal."

**The Open Mind.** Curse-ridden diamonds are small news beside really bloody crime, and of that we have had more than enough lately. I hope a wider audience than a single jury will have heard a learned King's Counsel's account of the abusive letters which he received because he was defending a man charged with peculiarly revolting crimes. This poison-penmanship, as counsel explained, was due to the fact that all the evidence had been intensively publicised, at the preliminary hearing before magistrates, long before the accused actually came to trial. When are we going to stop this scandal? I do not suggest that it made, or could have made, the smallest difference to the result of the Heath trial, but there are cases in which it might do so, and it is absurd to pretend that any jury can enter the box with a completely open mind when there has been all this preliminary, and totally unnecessary, publicity. They do things better in Scotland.

**Avert the Eyes.** As for the morbid exhibitions which murder and other " sensational " trials provoke, they have become such a recurring decimal of our society, and we seem to have moved so little from the animal orgies of the days of public executions, that no comment is necessary. But for sheer unhealthy and inhuman morbidity, I think the lowest point was reached by an incident of the Nuremberg trial. The Tribunal very properly ordered that no photographs should be taken of the accused while they were actually receiving sentence. Certain journalists strongly protested, and considered themselves deeply aggrieved by the decree. I am happy to think that they were not representative of their profession. It must be a strange human mind and heart which cannot leave to the condemned wretch, however vile, one last shred of privacy.

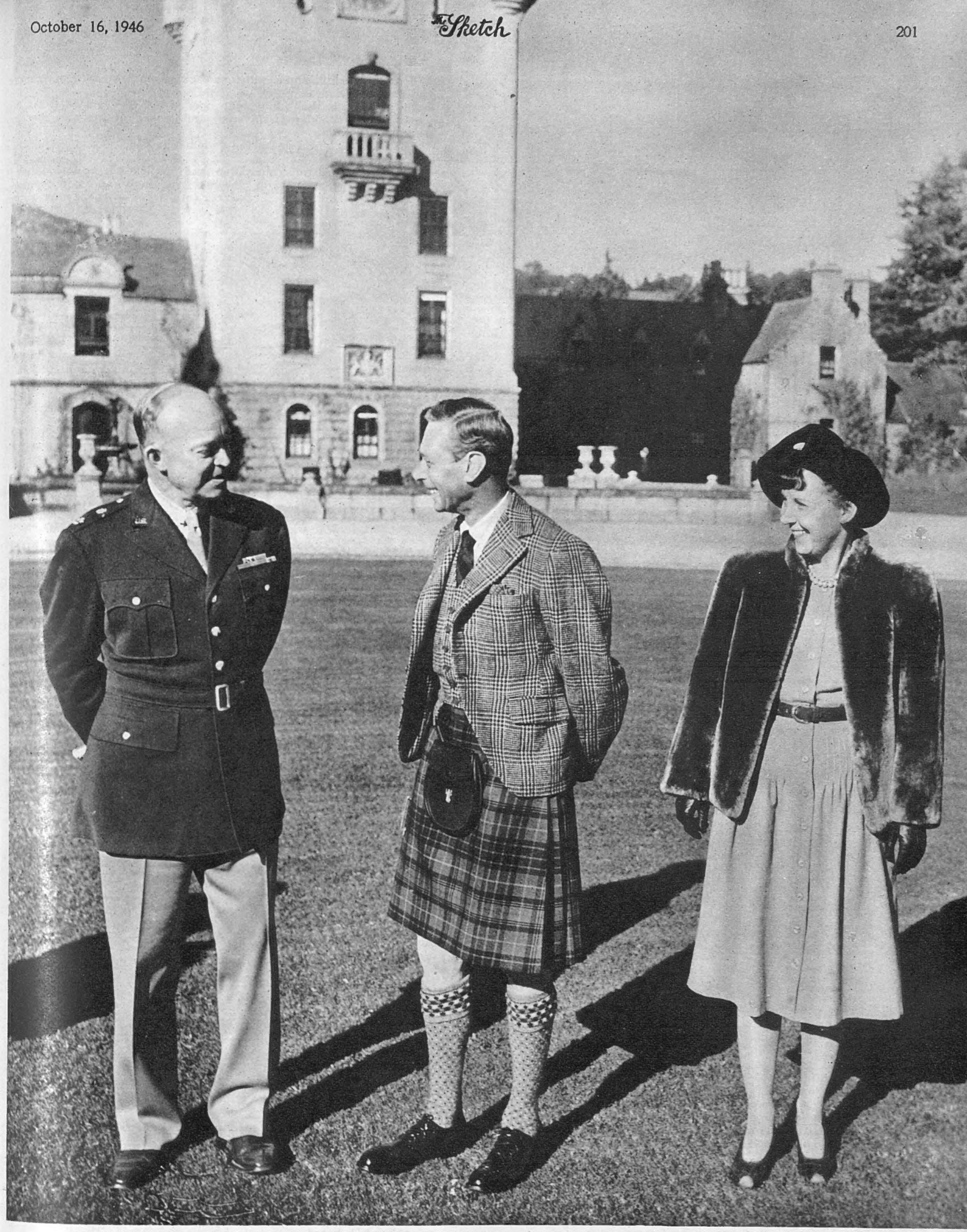
**Wonderful World.** Week's prize headline: " Zoo elephant likes faded rose blooms." This finally dispels the rumour that elephants have no soul above buns.—A former Minister of Transport has been using a caddie on wheels, a sort of trolley affair. The next stage is an internal-combustion caddie (one man-power, or at least one boy-power), and the next stage after that, I suppose, will be the internal-combustion golfer. Actually, the type already exists.—I accept without a qualm the statement that 440 million pounds change hands every year in England in bets, but when I read that £10,000 is wagered on an angling contest, then I begin to believe that we really *are* a sporting people. If I doubted it, I should be convinced by seeing that " Five in a Skiff will Row to France " (why not Eight?), and that an athlete proposes to keep on walking for six weeks to set up a record. Yes, a very wonderful world!




" Bing who? "

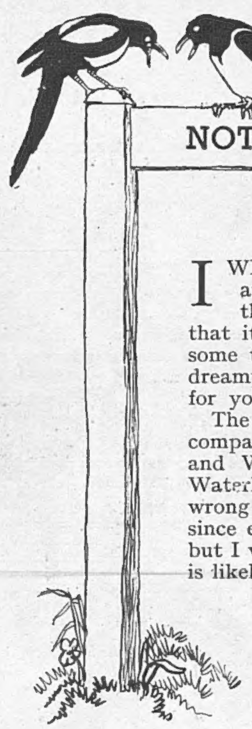
DRAWN BY BERT THOMAS.

*The one-hundred-and-fifty-second of our* SERIES OF PLATES IN FULL COLOUR *published in this issue of " The Sketch " is by* DAVID WRIGHT.



# BALMORAL CONVERSATION.

HIS MAJESTY the KING, GENERAL and MRS. EISENHOWER at Balmoral. Obviously the King enjoyed his conversations with the General (whose photograph appears on our front page). Last week his Majesty came south, spent a day in London, and then went to Sandringham to shoot. He will open Parliament in State on November 12. Owing to his generosity London will soon enjoy a magnificent exhibition, for he is lending 500 pictures from the Royal Collection for the winter show at the R.A. Galleries opening on October 26. Preparations for the Royal visit to South Africa in February are well advanced, and the work of adapting H.M.S. *Vanguard* to carry their Majesties and the Princesses, is in progress.



# NOT SO METROPOLITAN.

By JOYCE DENNYS.

I WENT to London last week to see my Play done at what is called a Try-out Theatre. The funny thing about seeing your play on the stage is that it makes you a bit dreamy and half-witted for some time afterwards. Charles says that if you are dreamy and half-witted anyway, it 's a bad look-out for you, and so it is.

The first thing I did was to lose my way on the comparatively easy journey between the Savoy Hotel and Waterloo Station, and when I finally got to Waterloo I somehow managed to park myself in the wrong train. As I have been travelling on that line since early childhood, it really was very silly indeed, but I was thinking of Dramatic Critics, a subject which is likely to throw any playwright into a sort of coma.

Just before the train moved out of the station a Young Man leapt in, hoisted his luggage into the rack, threw himself into a corner, put his muddy feet on the seat opposite, tilted his hat over his eyes, and went to sleep.

I like people who go to sleep in trains, because then I can look at them as much as I like and make up stories about them without embarrassing them by an unwinking stare. I decided that this Young Man was about thirty and probably, if the truth were known, going bald under his brown hat; good pin-stripe suit; expensive shoes; one of our more famous Public School Ties; rich, obviously, or he wouldn't be travelling First Class, and then I remembered that I was travelling First Class myself and nobody could possibly call me rich; but then, he wasn't a tired, middle-aged woman who had been to see her Play at a Try-out Theatre, so I went back to thinking him rich. What was he doing going down to the West? He didn't look in the least like a Country Person. Perhaps he was going to see his Old Mother; perhaps he was going to propose to the Squire's Daughter. He had had a good lunch, his face was flushed, and he snored gently from time to time.

" Clambered back to my own seat."

So there I sat, quite happy, not knowing I was in the wrong train, reading a little, dozing a little, and making up stories in my head about a plump Young Man. It was when the train began stopping at every station that I began to suspect that all was not well, and when no dining-car attendant came round like an angel from above, trumpeting the heavenly message of TEA, I knew that some dreadful mistake had been made.

Slowly we bumbled Westward, stopping at stations I had never heard of. Nobody came round for the tickets and I longed to wake my flushed and snoring neighbour and ask whither we were bound. At Salisbury my craving for tea became unbearable, but how to get out of the carriage? The pin-stripe legs were bang across the doorway. The obvious thing was to give them a smart rap with a rolled-up evening paper and say, " Kindly allow me to pass." But somehow I couldn't bring myself to do this. For some strange reason I had begun to feel sorry for the Young Man and to be convinced that the Squire's Daughter was going to refuse him, so I climbed up on to the seat, and clinging to the luggage-rack, stepped carefully over his legs and down on the other side.

While I was waiting with the other passengers round the urn I thought how presently the Young Man would wake up feeling terrible and see me drinking my nice hot tea, and in a sudden rush of blind generosity I bought a cup for him too (threepence). I put it down on the floor beside him and clambered back to my own seat once more upsetting a good deal of tea as I did so.

Soon afterwards the Young Man opened his eyes, smacked his lips once or twice, shuddered, shivered, and looked at me and my cup with cold dislike.

" There 's a cup for you on the floor beside you," I said, feeling like Santa Claus.

" Is there ? " said the Young Man, and he picked it up and drank it off at a gulp. " Fairly warm," he said grudgingly, and said no more.

At the next station he got out, leaving the door of the carriage open so that heavy rain blew in on my legs.

I sat in my corner reflecting sadly on the boorishness of young men. The train crawled on and I tried to sleep. At seven o'clock it deposited me at a Junction about twenty miles from home. I went to a call-box and rang up Charles. " Charles, I 'm stuck at the Junction."

" I wondered what had happened to you," said Charles.

" There 's no train for two hours."

" I 'll come and fetch you, Henrietta."

" Oh, Charles, I don't think you have any idea what a nice man you are."

" My London Hat went bowling down the lane."

" You sound very overtired," said Charles, and rang off.

The Junction was full of whistling winds, as Junctions always are, so I thought I would walk to meet Charles. My suit-case was small and light and the nice country smells were refreshing after London, but after a time it suddenly became very dark and began to rain, and in some peculiar way I turned left at the cross-roads instead of right. After a time I began to have misgivings, but it was a lonely road and there was nobody to ask.

At last a man on a bicycle came by. When I asked him if I was on the right road, he looked at me gravely and said, " You 'm Pixie-led by the look of yu," and sent me back in the opposite direction.

The rain was now falling heavily and a high wind sprang up. My London Hat was blown from my head, and went bowling down the lane, and in retrieving it from the hedge I laddered a stocking and nearly lost a London Shoe. My suitcase now weighed a ton, and I was panting with exhaustion, it was nearly dark and raining more than ever. " Why do I write Plays ? " I cried aloud, but there was no answer from the lowering skies.

At the cross-roads I sat down on my suitcase, afraid to go further for fear of missing Charles again. By this time I was feeling exactly like King Lear but couldn't remember a suitable quotation, so tried feeling like Hermia instead.

> Never so weary, never so in woe;
> Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers
> I can no further crawl, no further go;
> My legs can keep no pace with my desires . . .

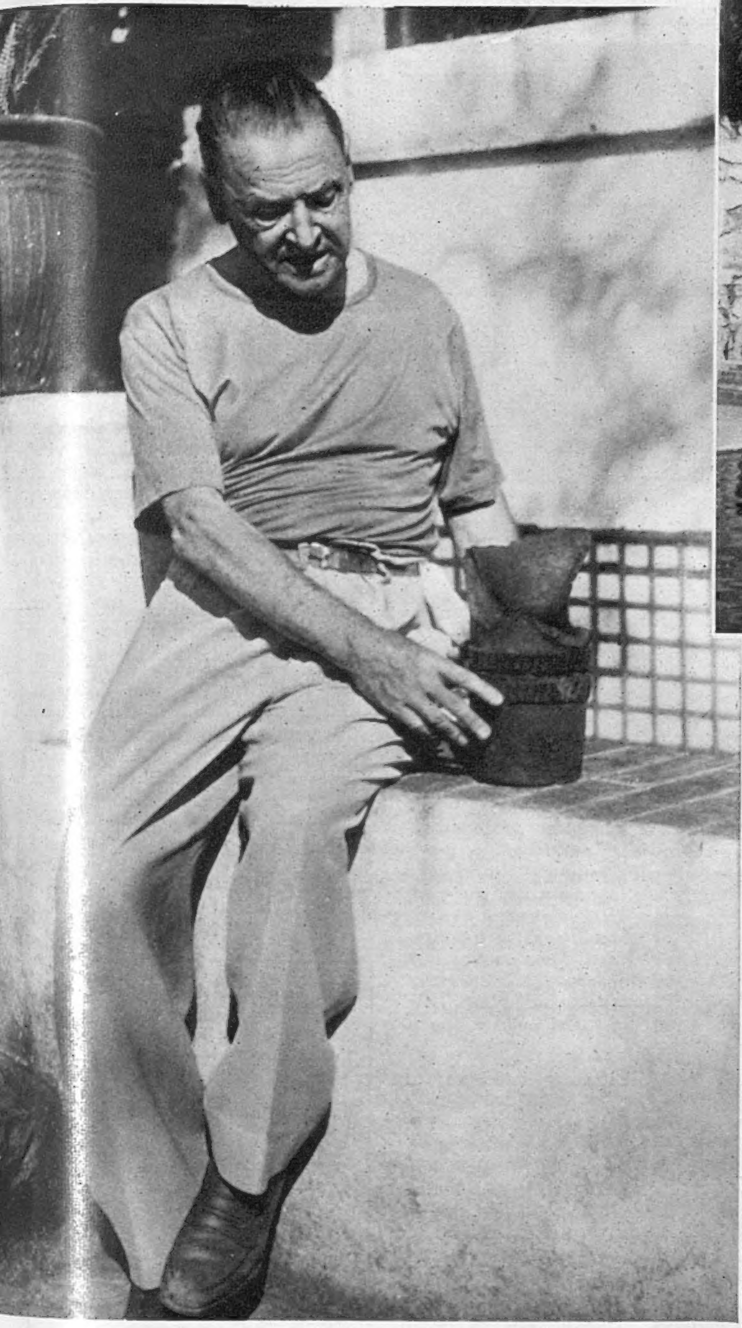
Headlights flashed on me and I heard Charles say, " Get in, Henrietta and stop baying at the moon."

" Oh, Charles, I lost my way."

" I knew you would," said Charles.

" ' Never so weary, never so in woe.' "

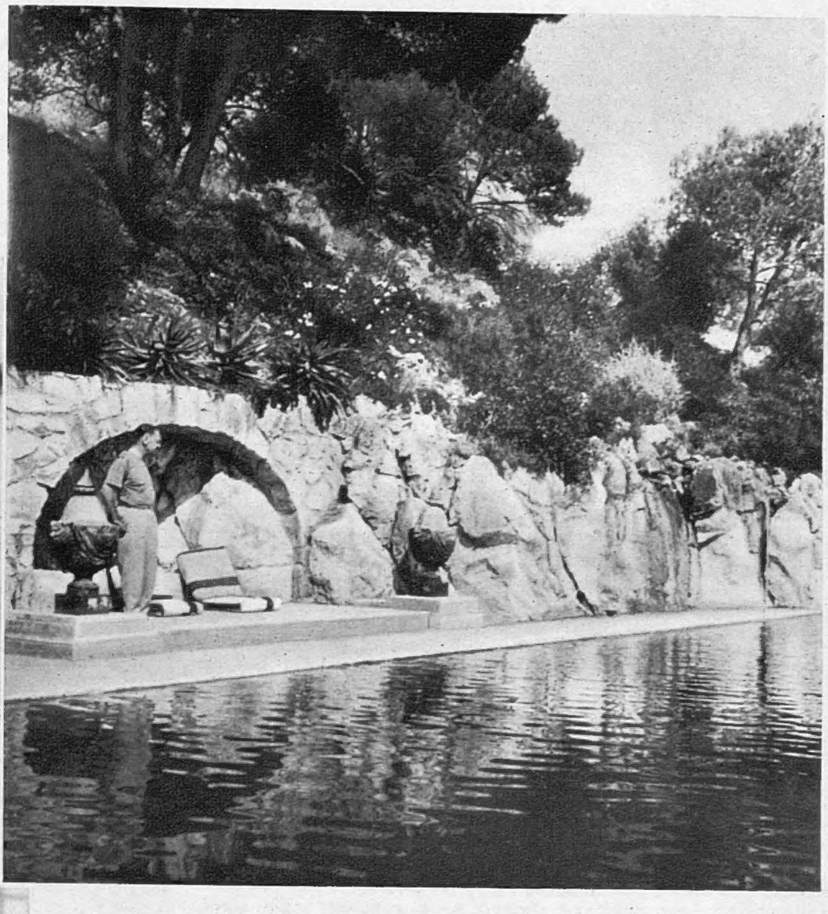
# "THEN AND NOW"—DAMAGE TO THE MAUGHAM VILLA.



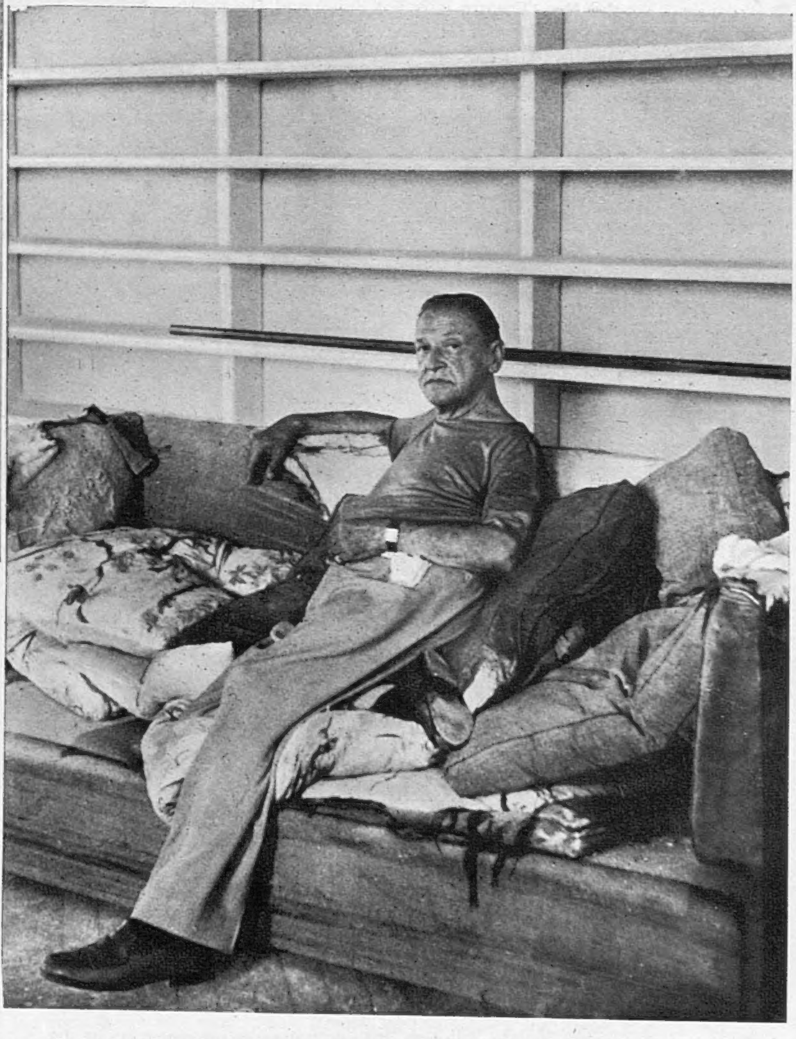
MR. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM *was in London for the revival of " Our Betters " at the Playhouse. This picture, however, was taken at his Riviera villa and shows him contemplating bomb damage.*

MR. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM is one of our outstanding literary figures. Born in 1874, his first success was " Lady Frederick " (1907), which Firth Shephard is reviving at the Savoy on November 21, while in 1908 he had four original plays running concurrently in London. " Sheppey " (1933) was his last play, but " The Circle " originally seen in 1921 was revived in 1931 and 1944 and now at the Playhouse " Our Betters " is running as a period production. It was first given in New York in 1917 and came to London in 1923. His novels include " Liza of Lambeth," " The Painted Veil " and many brilliant stories. " The Razor's Edge " came out in 1944 and " Then and Now " an historical novel of Italy in the time of Cesare Borgia was published this year.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY POINT DE VUE.



*The author of " Then and Now " might well be murmuring those very words—for* THEN *the bathing-pool of his villa was in perfect order—*NOW *it is obviously not so good.*



*Sad study of the distinguished author posed before his empty bookshelves. The Germans looted the lot during the occupation.*

# STAGE CAMEOS.

## By JOHN RUSSELL.

"HAMLET" without the Prince is proverbially a poor affair; but if one may judge from the Old Vic production at the New Theatre, "LEAR" without the King would make an excellent short melodrama of family life. One of the virtues of Mr. Olivier's production is that each of the subsidiary characters, so often foreshortened in the interests of a star actor, is given room and leisure to develop. Even Oswald becomes an individual; and among so much unforced and naturalistic playing, Mr. Peter Copley's delicately-spoken Edmund takes his place as the most reasonable of villains. Mr. Relph's Gloucester, and the chivalry of Mr. Hannen's Kent, are two plain-hearted successes; but "Lear" is, after all, a play about abnormal suffering and abnormal passion, and it is possible, in the opening scenes, to set too low and too natural a key. Audiences are always glad to find that not much is being demanded of them, and when Mr. Olivier hoisted them in a moment to the topmost endurances of the mad scenes, they showed their discomfiture by tittering. But at least there was no mistaking the ferocious power of Miss Pamela Brown's Goneril; once or twice this actress was allowed to break through the general politeness of the acting, and her great wheeling and circling motions are among the evening's best memories. Miss Margaret Leighton, all too ladylike in last season's productions, added several cubits to her stature by a Regan whose drooping, lust-laden demeanour came straight from the Old Testament. These were capital performances; but, in the end, productions of "Lear" stand or fall by the performance of the King. This King has at least no lack of physical means. At the end of four hours the performance is still springing surprises; and nobody will forget his last gestures, as he dies—still pumping, against all hope, a little life into Cordelia's dead side.

Mr. Olivier's Lear, then, is a considerable enterprise. Most beautifully and lucidly spoken throughout its length, it contains also some moments to crack the heart. To put it explicitly: there are perhaps seven moments during the evening at which Mr. Olivier reaches the summit of theatrical art. That, already, places him among the great names of the English stage. But the allegory of Lear does not depend upon moments; the actor must strike at once a note of supreme authority, of great attainments nearing their physical end, and he must carry these over into the scenes on the heath. Where this is done, the heath scenes become the very greatest thing, the top thing in all Shakespeare. At the New Theatre it is not done, and the heath scenes are not integrated into the rest of the play. Of all the players in this "Lear," Mr. Alec Guinness as the Fool gets nearest to the symbolic centre of the play, though his part is the hardest. But Lear and his Fool exist on a level of imaginative reality to which the smooth realism of the rest of the production implicitly gives the lie. Mr. Roger Furse's scenery has its part in this; the stage-hands are for ever shoving his Saxon arches to and fro, but the heath seems no bigger than a putting-green in front of Gloucester's castle, with the hovel a derelict tool-shed on the eighteenth green.

Noble ventures, such as Mr. Olivier's "Lear," deserve in courtesy to be judged by the highest standards; and this production is very easily the best thing of the year. Mr. Priestley's "AN INSPECTOR CALLS" is, in comparison, a bagatelle; but its first two acts are excellently made, and as solid as the silver, the mahogany and the long-wearing Axminster which grace its scene. It gets away slowly, to the ponderous irony of which its author is a master; but with the appearance of Mr. Ralph Richardson things get better for the audience, and delightfully worse for the other characters. Mr. Richardson has the art of making virtue attractive; and though I do not personally care for Mr. Priestley's righteousness, or for the laborious wisdom which he cooks up after the event, Mr. Richardson plays the part as if it were as important to him as Falstaff or Peer Gynt. Two senior newcomers to the company, Miss Marian Spencer and Mr. Julien Mitchell, gave a copper-bottom to the family whose misdeeds are the point of the play. Miss Leighton let a little of her Regan overlap into this smug household, with results not foreseen, perhaps, by Mr. Priestley; and Mr. Guinness, with his soft-centred libertine, completed the extraordinary quartet of performances which has made him, in my view at least, the actor of the year. Mr. Guinness persistently and unobtrusively does things which other actors cannot do; and such an actor was never more needed.

"KING LEAR" *(Old Vic Company programme; New Theatre). Alec Guinness gives a most understanding performance as The Fool; pale, anxious though smiling; fearful of a joke misfired; apprehensive as a thrashed menial. He substitutes a still pathos for the traditional hop-skip-and-jump method. A photograph of Laurence Olivier as King Lear is on another page.*

Before going off to Filey and Skegness, the San Carlo Opera Company gave a "BARBER OF SEVILLE," which, when reanimated by Paolo Silveri's well-favoured and decently-sung Figaro, offered some points of interest. Mme. Carosio shook Rosina's arias out of her head with every appearance of ease, and there was much to enjoy in Melchiore Luise's well-rounded Basilio. Ragged ensembles and loud and inflexible orchestral playing took some of the polish off a piece which derives, after all, from a most delicate tradition.

"THE SHEPHARD SHOW," at the Princes, is also a very noisy evening, but its particular tradition is not delicate at all; and if it were, the four famous comedians involved would soon render it less so. Mr. Douglas Byng's liberated fencing-mistress is one of his best inventions, and Miss Marie Burke did nobly in a style of life to which she is not accustomed; but, most of all, the sketches were feeble, and the pastiche of "Jardin des Lilas" is not up to Miss Wendy Toye's usual standard.

"AN INSPECTOR CALLS" *(Old Vic Company programme; New Theatre). The Inspector cross-examines the son of the house, drunken young wastrel Eric Birling, in connection with a girl's suicide. L. to r.: Sheila Birling—Margaret Leighton; Mr. Birling—Julian Mitchell; Mrs. Birling—Marian Spencer; Inspector Goole—Ralph Richardson; Eric Birling—Alec Guinness.*

### STAGE.

*"MUSTS":*

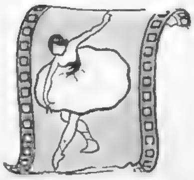
"THE FIRST GENTLEMAN" (Savoy).
"UNDER THE COUNTER" (Phoenix).
"SWEETEST AND LOWEST" (Ambassadors).
"BIG BEN" (Adelphi).
THE OLD VIC THEATRE CO. (New).

*WELL WORTH SEEING.*

"HIGH TIME" (Palladium).
"LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN" (Haymarket).
"PERCHANCE TO DREAM" (Hippodrome).
"THE SHOP AT SLY CORNER" (St. Martin's).
"IS YOUR HONEYMOON REALLY NECESSARY?" (Duke of York's).
"FOLLOW THE GIRLS" (His Majesty's).
"WORM'S EYE VIEW" (Whitehall).
"THE GUINEA-PIG" (Criterion).
"SONG OF NORWAY" (Palace).
"FIFTY-FIFTY" (Strand).
"BETTER LATE" (Garrick).
"HERE COME THE BOYS" (Saville).
"NO ROOM AT THE INN" (Winter Garden).
"THE WINSLOW BOY" (Lyric).

# CINEMA CAMEOS.

## By C. A. LEJEUNE.



GOOD-BYE, or rather, *au revoir* to the Carlton, that luxurious little theatre in the Haymarket. With " BLUE SKIES " in occupation, I don't expect to have to review another picture there until the robin redbreasts, as Madam Butterfly so daintily puts it, are busy nesting. Paramount have used the same simple formula for " Blue Skies " that they used in the case of " Holiday Inn." Bing and Fred have been partners in show business. They both fall in love with the same girl. Bing woos her with song, Fred with dance, to Irving Berlin's music. She likes Fred, but loves Bing. After misunderstanding, parting and heartbreak, she eventually gets him. Sentimental ? Yes. Conventional ? By all means. Successful ? You bet it 's successful. Had the story deviated by one hair's-breadth from its expected course, had the producers changed the routine happy ending by one tear or smile, I should have expected the audience to get up *en bloc* and tear the screen to pieces.

There is only one thing to do with a show of this sort, and that is, provide just enough of a story to ensure a warm glow of emotion, and then leave the artists to get on with it. In this particular case, there is no fear of failure. Both Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire are princes of their craft. Their work, each along his own peculiar line, has the excitement of high mastery. The only trouble, when the two are on the screen together, is to decide which of them to follow. It was generally assumed in the early days of his success that Bing, although a " wizard " crooner, was no actor. That suggestion is absurd to-day.

As for Fred Astaire, he has always seemed to me one of the half-dozen really great artists of the cinema. If " Blue Skies " is to be his last picture, it is some solace to feel that he is going out with his powers undiminished. He is at the top of his form, dancing with the fluent, enchanting line of a Disney symphony, and creating, in " Puttin' in the Ritz," a number that can be ranked with his great classics.

" LA FEMME DU BOULANGER " *(Curzon). Aimable, excellent baker, is distraught ; his wife has run off with another man ; he cannot bake. The Provençal villagers will have no bread unless they can persuade him to go back to his oven. L. to r. : Tonin—Blavette ; Casimir—Dullac ; Petugue—Maffre ; Aimable—Raimu ; the Schoolmaster—Robert Bassac.*

If you need any other inducements to see the show at the Carlton, here are a few chosen at random : the blonde Miss Caulfield, who really seems worth the doughty competition of Bing and Fred ; the exuberant Mr. De Wolfe, whose imitation of a genteel housewife in a cocktail-bar is as acute as it is funny ; fresh, soft and pleasant Technicolor ; and a scene between Bing and a very small girl that is as pretty a bit of nursery *causerie* as we have had on the screen for years.

At last the movie moguls of Metroland are beginning to appreciate that Britain has an Empire, that the Empire has stories, and that these stories will delight many nostalgic travellers, and need not be without interest even to the homebound clerk who has never journeyed further afield than far-flung Margate. It has occurred to several of our producers lately to send units abroad to make films in our Dominions and Colonies, and I understand that the practice is likely to increase and become something of a policy. If all these new Empire films are as refreshing as "THE OVERLANDERS" (Leicester Square), nobody should complain.

" The Overlanders " is the first film to be made by an English company in Australia. Ealing Studios sent out director Harry Watt, cameraman Osmond Borradaile, and a handful of technicians. The players are all Australians, some of them professional actors, others eager amateurs. The picture tells a story of the great cattle migration of 1942, when the Northern Territory was threatened with Japanese invasion. It is based on actual events, but the characters are fictional. The hero is a boss-drover called Dan McAlpine, who refuses to shoot his herd of fine cattle when the order goes out to scorch the earth and leave nothing for the little yellow men. Instead, he undertakes to " overland " them ; to drive 1000 head of half-wild beasts, in a bad season, a distance of 2000 miles into the interior. He enlists a small " mob " of mainly unskilled helpers. He collects horses where he can, and when a number of them die on the way through eating poison berries, he catches wild hill ponies and breaks them. Through one cause and another, the little band of drovers diminishes, but Dan McAlpine goes doggedly on, putting the miles and the months behind him. He loses a few cattle in a stampede, a few more on the rough edge of a craggy hillside. He saves the herd with difficulty when the thirsty beasts, halted beside a bog, go half-mad at the smell of water. Every inch of the way he is alert to danger, relying more on his steely nerves and his cunning in the ways of cattle than on his stock-whip. The whole journey is a contest between a thousand beasts and a man, with nature apparently on the side of numbers.

" The Overlanders " benefits enormously from the appearance of tall Australian actor Chips Rafferty as the indomitable McAlpine. Mr. Rafferty has been a horseman since he was eight, and a drover before he became an actor. His emotional range may be small, but the film does not call for subtleties of playing. What it requires is the right sort of hero, and this one is every inch (78 of them) a hero. The leading lady, Daphne Campbell, knows even less about the nuances of playing than Mr. Rafferty, but she is uncommonly pleasant to look upon, and she rides a horse like a Valkyrie. The camera-work is superb, the atmosphere tonic, and the view of the Australian countryside fresh and stimulating. All in all, I recommend " The Overlanders " to you for your health and pleasure, with the same confidence that I would prescribe a day by the sea.

They have brought out an old bottle of vintage wine at the Curzon, for the delight of the connoisseurs. Marcel Pagnol's " LA FEMME DU BOULANGER " is something very special. The story concerns itself with the affairs of a single summer's day in a Provençal village ; the hot Sunday when the shepherd runs away with the baker's wife. The shocking thing happens, and the baker, desolated, refuses to set hand to oven ; whereupon the mayor, the priest, the labourer and the gossips, anxious to get their teeth into a crust of crisp, fresh bread again, conspire to bring the lady back and overlook her peccadillo. The film, magnificently played by the late, great Raimu, is too mellow for satire ; it is dry, but never bitter ; the cordial of the sun is in it, and the blandness of a world where time moves slowly. A lovely film.

" THE OVERLANDERS " *(Leicester Square). Australian Daphne Campbell has a nice seat on a horse ; rides 2000 miles with the cattle-drovers over tough going to get the beasts away before the threatened Jap invasion, and to avoid a " scorched earth " Government order.*

STAGE.—*(Continued.)*

" GRAND NATIONAL NIGHT " (Apollo).
" CRIME AND PUNISHMENT " (Globe).
" PICK-UP GIRL " (Casino).
" THE POLTERGEIST " (Vaudeville).
" SWEETHEART MINE " (Victoria Palace).
" CLUTTERBUCK " (Wyndham's).
" FOOLS RUSH IN " (Fortune).
" BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD " (St. James's).
" MESSAGE FOR MARGARET " (Westminster).
" MOTHER OF MEN " (Comedy).
" THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH " (Piccadilly).
" THE SHEPHARD SHOW " (Princes).
" OUR BETTERS " (Playhouse).

CINEMA.

" NIGHT AND DAY " (Warner).
" BLUE SKIES " (Carlton).
" THE OVERLANDERS " (Leicester Square).
" LA FEMME DU BOULANGER " (Curzon).
" THE BRIDE WORE BOOTS " (Plaza).

*While every endeavour is made to keep this list up to date, we cannot hold ourselves responsible for any errors which may occur.*

*With Ailsa Craig rising grandly out of the sea in the distance:*

# THE INCHCAPES COME
# A SCOTTISH PEER IN

GLENAPP CASTLE, Ayrshire, the lovely Scottish seat of the Earl of Inchcape, was a military hospital during the war. It has just been de-requisitioned and Lord and Lady Inchcape have been enjoying a holiday there with their children, and have been getting the house set in order once more after its war service. Lord Inchcape is just leaving for India on P. and O. Steamship Company business. He served during the war in the 27th Lancers and was

*Across the woods to the sea: A magnificent view from the windows of Glenapp Castle.*

*The* EARL *and* COUNTESS OF INCHCAPE *fishing on Loch Kilantringar on the Glenapp estate.*

GLENAPP CASTLE, *the Scottish seat of the Earl of Inchcape, which has just been de-requisitioned.*

*Looking towards Ballantrae from Glenapp.*

*The left wing of Glenapp. The castle was built in 1870 by Bryce, and stands in a magnificent position.*

# BACK TO GLENAPP: HIS AYRSHIRE HOME.

recently demobilised. His marriage to Mrs. Claude Hannay, daughter of Sir Richard Arthur Pease, Bt., and Lady Pease, took place in 1941, and they have two children, Viscount Glenapp and Lady Lucinda Mackay. The first Earl of Inchcape was a distinguished figure in the shipping world. Four years President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Council of India, 1897-1911, and Vice-President of the Suez Canal Company, he was raised to the peerage in 1911, became a Viscount in 1924, and an Earl in 1929.

*Another view of Glenapp. The house and estate was purchased by the first Earl of Inchcape, grandfather of the present peer.*

*The* COUNTESS OF INCHCAPE, VISCOUNT GLENAPP, LADY LUCINDA MACKAY *and* MARTIN GWYNNE *in the grounds of Glenapp.*

# PERSONALITY PICTURES.

PRINCESS LUBA OBOLENSKY *is working at London Airport as a receptionist for Pan-American Airways. She is twenty-four, and, during the war, was a Naval V.A.D.*

GROUP CAPTAIN J. CUNNINGHAM, *ace night-fighter, triple D.S.O. and D.F.C. and Bar, is chief test pilot for the de Havilland Company in succession to the late Geoffrey de Havilland.*

MRS. JOHN GOLDSMITH *is riding Urgay at exercise. He is the top-weight French challenger for the Cesarewitch, which is to be run to-day, October 16, at Newmarket. Urgay (Fiterari—Urgach) belongs to Mme. P. Lafarge and is trained by Captain John Goldsmith.*

CHRISTENING GROUP. *Lady Fairey, Sir Richard Fairey, Captain Michael Ling, Mrs. Richard Fairey, with baby, Charles Richard, Mr. Richard Fairey and Mr. and Mrs. E. Skimming (l. to r.), posed outside the private chapel of Bossington House, Houghton, Hants, after the baptism of Sir Richard Fairey's grandson.*

MAJOR GEORGE DAVID CHETWODE *and* LADY WILLA ELLIOT *were married at St. James's, Spanish Place. He is the son of Admiral Sir George Chetwode and of the late Lady Chetwode, and she is the younger daughter of the Earl and Countess of Minto.*

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, *accompanied by the Princesses, stood on the bridge of the liner Queen Elizabeth when the vessel underwent her speed trials over the measured mile in the Firth of Clyde. At one point Her Majesty took the helm. Her personal standard flew from the masthead for the seven hours she and her daughters were on board.*

# OF THE HOUSE OF BERNADOTTE.

H.R.H. PRINCESS SIBYLLA OF SWEDEN is the wife of Prince Gustaf Adolf, eldest son of the Crown Prince of Sweden, and grandson of the eighty-eight-year-old King of Sweden. She was married in 1932 and had four little girls, the Princesses Margaretha, Brigitta, Desirée and Christina, before the long-hoped-for heir made his appearance on April 30 this year. Prince Gustaf Adolf is a near relative of our Royal Family as his mother was the late Princess Margaret of Connaught. The House of Bernadotte is descended from Napoleon's general, Marshal Bernadotte, who became King of Sweden in 1818, in succession to Charles XIII.

"*Hello, photographer!*" *Princess Christina takes a peep at the camera operator.* [PHOTOGRAPH BY NEBO.]

PRINCESS CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN, *with a wreath of wild flowers in her blonde curls.* [PHOTOGRAPH BY NEBO.]

PRINCESS SIBYLLA *and* PRINCE CARL GUSTAF, *the long-hoped-for heir, born on April 30, 1946.* [PHOTOGRAPH BY NEBO.]

*Little Princess with the ball at her feet: Princess Christina in a moment of perfect happiness.*

# CHELSEA COTTAGE HOME OF "KING LEAR" AND CONSORT.

*At the door of the Chelsea cottage Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh chat to callers.*

*Wide-eyed like this Vivien Leigh captured Cæsar in the film version of Shaw's "Cæsar and Cleopatra."*

*It was Laurence's turn to cuddle the beautiful Siamese, named New after the New Theatre, who condescends to share their home with them.*

*N.B. A Coloured*

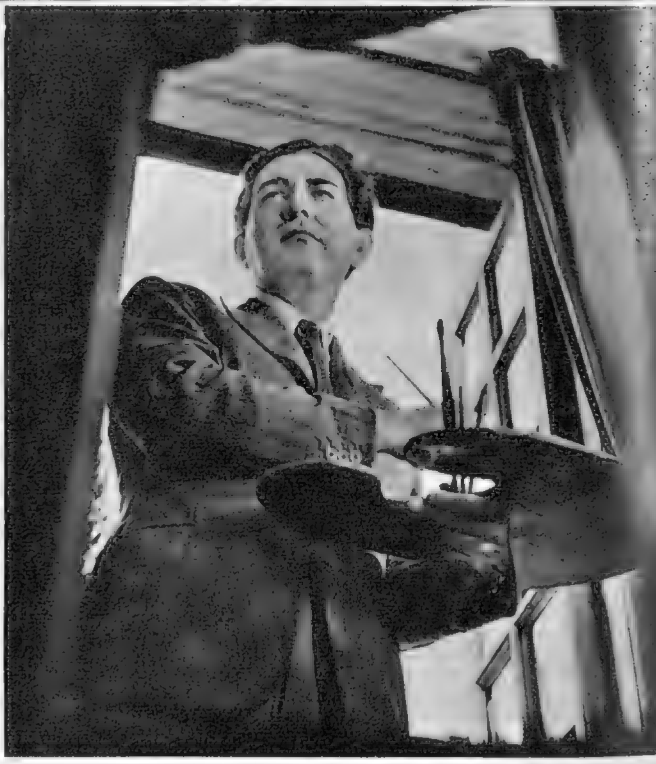
LAURENCE OLIVIER'S *make-up as King Lear, like his playing of the part, is magnificent. The lowering fiery eyes strike out from a hairy maze.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN VICKERS.

gures of the highest quality in drama and on screen are Britain's married r Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. Returning with the Old Vic Company m New York, they were described as "two of Britain's best ambassadors." e Company's success was so instantaneous, dynamic, that a contract with minimum guarantee of $125,000, was offered them with Vivien Leigh to ke a film. Olivier's "Henry V" film is drawing crowds in America. Paris acclaimed him in "Richard III" as one of the finest actors they had ever had as a visitor. His earlier successes were gained by the portrayal of youthful characteristics, impetuosity, romantic grace, and now Olivier turns ancient madman as King Lear with equal versatility at the New, while Vivien Leigh, brilliant, unemotional as the servant-seductress, plays in the revival of Thornton Wilder's "The Skin of Our Teeth" at the Piccadilly.

*nserted in this issue.*

# PAINTER PORTRAYS HIS PAINTER-WIFE.



RODRIGO MOYNIHAN, A.R.A., has just finished a portrait of Princess Elizabeth, commissioned by the Queen, who is interested in his work. Ten years ago this young painter was a leading member of the Euston Road Group, a set of young men in revolt against "barren" art and abstract surrealism, determined to "base art on observation." Their attack became a first-class issue in the art world. They were labelled "rebels." Since those days Mr. Moynihan has forged ahead. He became an official war artist; painted General Ritchie, Lord Bridgeman, the Earl of Sandwich, Mr. Attlee among dozens of other leading personalities; was elected A.R.A. in 1944 and his "Still Life with a Skull" was bought this year by the Royal Academy under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest for the Tate Gallery. He was born in Teneriffe in 1910; studied in Italy at the Firenze Academy; in 1931 married Elinor Bellingham, also a painter, and they have one son. The Moynihans live in Chelsea.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE KONIG.

*Both the dogs and the girls in this group have appeared on the covers of famous American national magazines. Slim and well-turned-out they lined up for the Canine Cavalcade which opened New York's National Dog Week.*

# THOROUGHBRED BEAUTY—COVER GIRLS AND COVER DOGS.

New York's National Dog Week opened with a remarkably decorative Canine Cavalcade of Cover Girls and Cover Dogs. Both the girls and the animals have appeared on the covers of such well-known magazines as "Collier's," "Life," and "Saturday Evening Post," and they made a brave show of thoroughbred elegance. The dogs' coats were as well-brushed, shining and soigné as the girls' curls and the affair was a fashion show as well as a pets' parade.

JACKIE COPELAND *and the Afghan hound, International Champion Rudiki of Pride's Hill. Her feathered hat and his feathered ears go well together.*

RAE CALDWELL, HARRY CONOVER *and* JINX FALKENBURG McCRARY, *who is announcing. Rae is holding Bedlington terrier Champion Canis Laris.*

# WE TAKE OFF OUR HAT TO—

MRS. HETHERINGTON *(left)* and MISS GARVEY—*for putting up the finest golf championship final in years ; Mrs. Hetherington for her championship win on her honeymoon ; and her husband for caddying her to victory.*

LONDON'S LORD MAYOR-ELECT—*for his relevant reading.*

MRS. HETHERINGTON won the British Women's Amateur Golf Championship at Hunstanton, at the 36th hole, after battling with Miss Philomena Garvey, the Irish champion, in the most thrilling final in golf championship history. Mrs. Hetherington comes of a large family of golfers ; has perfect timing and body balance. She was on her honeymoon at the time, and her husband acted caddy for her. In the picture (l. to r.): Mr. G. W. Hetherington ; Mrs. Hetherington, the winner ; Miss Philomena Garvey, the runner-up, and Mr. G. Barnes, her caddy.

SIR BRACEWELL SMITH, Lord Mayor-elect of London, sat for a pre-mayoral photograph with a very appositely-named volume in his hand. In a sense London *will* belong to him after next month's inaugural celebrations. Sir Bracewell is a well-known hotel magnate ; lives in the Park Lane Hotel, where he also has a private office.

RED-HEADED MISS PAT HORNSBY-SMITH swept the Conservative Party to its feet with rounds of cheering when at its Blackpool Conference she made the most vitriolic anti-bureaucratic speech it has heard in years. After which she bowed prima donna-like and sat down. Some points she made: We are starved for man-power, yet 3779 people doodle about with petrol rationing . . . there are 961 clothing enforcement officers ; 420 food snoopers " trying to find out if I have a sandwich and coffee when my hair is done in lunch-time " . . . 1,000,000 more Civil Servants, local government officers than miners. . . This BU nonsense means a smaller loaf at a higher price, and 2000 Civil Servants fill in forms on BUs who would be better employed getting in the harvest. Miss Hornsby-Smith, a Richmond and Barnes local councillor, was formerly private secretary to Lord Selborne when he was Minister of Economic Warfare.

AFTER an Empire-wide competition, involving selection from countless photographs, Leading Aircraftwoman Elizabeth Harvey, of Claygate, Surrey, was told by Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert that she had been chosen as the ideal W.A.A.F. for the poster for the recruitment of W.A.A.F. personnel.

COUNCILLOR PAT HORNSBY-SMITH—*for being a red-headed Tory with a red-hot tongue.*

LEADING AIRCRAFTWOMAN ELIZABETH HARVEY—*for being the ideal W.A.A.F.*

# AND WE APPLAUD

CICELY COURTNEIDGE, for running a "black market" for 375 performances, to packed houses, with irrepressible vim.

CICELY COURTNEIDGE; HARTLEY POWER.

THORLEY WALTERS; CICELY COURTNEIDGE.

CICELY COURTNEIDGE, one of our finest comediennes has completed, with cast, the 375th performance of "Under the Counter" at the Phœnix. The only variation in the full houses is the amount of standing room available, and that depends on the weather. Miss Courtneidge is the beginning, the middle, and the end of it all; on the stage nearly all through it, with neat burlesque, perfect timing, exquisite precision. Her resourceful talent for coming by silks, satins, shoes and anything else in the black market is undaunted by the machinations of the law.

THORLEY WALTERS; CICELY COURTNEIDGE; FRANCIS ROBERTS.

# A PROPOS RADIO.

QUIZ-MASTER BILL GATES *puts a Warrant Officer through it in the cash Quiz of "Merry-Go-Round."*

*Side by side the little victims wait their turn, watching keenly the reactions of the martyr of the moment.*

Most popular is quiz-time in the B.B.C. "Merry-Go-Round" programme on Friday nights. A huddle of ecstatic people collect round the mike to watch the writhing, hear the stuttering of one called up to endure the Quiz-Master's scorching fire of questions. Some get prizes; some don't; but the watchers enjoy the item with sadistic pleasure. Miss Richmal Crompton, creator of the boy pest "Just William" has had huge success with her books, and on the radio, and now three "William" films are scheduled for production.

MISS RICHMAL CROMPTON'S *schoolboy pest "Just William" is having a second lease of radio life just now; will be the central character of a Christmas show.*

*Here is a shorn lamb from the Services answering Bill Gates' gruelling questions to the best of his ability.*

*Sunbath on the terrace of Burton Hall, Stillorgan; the Ryan home in the Dublin mountains.*

# JAMES MASON'S UNKNOWN CO-LEAD.

KATHLEEN RYAN, unknown twenty-three-year-old, was discovered in Dublin by Carol Reed; chosen to play opposite James Mason in Two Cities' "Odd Man Out." In this, her first film, she has one of the most sensational, dramatic rôles any young actress could be called upon to play—that of the tragic Kathleen who loves the leader of an illegal organisation. She will be the most simply-dressed star of the year, wearing one costume only; high-necked woollen jumper; brown skirt; well-worn shoes. This gold-eyed, red-haired actress took a degree at University College, Dublin; finished her education in Paris; trained in the Dublin Abbey School of Acting. She is married to Dr. Derry Devane; has a year-old daughter Barbara; lives in Foxrock near Leopardstown Racecourse, outside Dublin.

KATHLEEN RYAN, *James Mason's red-headed "opposite" in "Odd Man Out," took a walk through the grounds of her home, near Dublin.*

*The new star took a rest at home after a strenuous four months' work at Denham on her first film.*

*A rough-and-tumble on the lawn with Buttons the "mouse-terrier" and household pet.*

# THE LITERARY LOUNGER.

## By L. P. HARTLEY.

If one were looking for categories in which works of fiction might conveniently be pigeon-holed, one might hit on three: the cosmopolitan, the national and the regional. Henry James's novels belong to the first group; Jane Austen's to the second; Hardy's to the third. The characters in "The Wings of the Dove" are equally at home, or equally not at home, in England or in Italy; those in "Emma" could not be transplanted from their native country; Hardy's people belong heart and soul to Wessex—it is difficult to think of them living anywhere else. The regional novelist seems to labour under a disadvantage compared to the other two. But his very limitations, the fact that his frontiers are drawn so close, strengthen and stimulate his art. He is further from chaos than the novelist with a wider field of action, and art abhors chaos; he is hedged about by conventions and traditions, which are the bulwarks of art. His books, if they are faithful transcriptions of the life of a district, have automatically a character of their own, independent of whatever individuality he may impart to them; and character is a quality very hard to come by.

Miss Doreen Wallace's novels of Suffolk and the Suffolk border always have character, and "Billy Potter" is no exception. Her unerring ear for dialogue is what strikes one first, but her regionalism goes deeper than the tones of the human voice; one feels it in the landscape, in people's point of view, in the least as well as in the most important acts of living. She does not have to aim at verisimilitude; it follows her about.

**A Misfit.** However, the temptation to think that people who talk in dialect are somehow more "real" than those who do not is one that must be resisted. Just because the grandparents of Billy the bastard talk so convincingly should not blind us to the fact that the grandmother is almost unbelievably unkind to him, scolding him, beating him, and taunting him continually with being an intolerable burden on their poverty. Indeed, almost everyone's hand is against Billy; and one asks oneself, Would a boy with as admirable a character as he turns out to have, have been so universally pushed and kicked about, even if he did not like work, at school or on the farm, and preferred the many forms of poaching that the countryside provided? It might have been so; Billy's nature might simply have been waiting for the love of a good woman (which he presently wins) to transform him to a pattern husband and father, and later to an heroic soldier. But I cannot help feeling that these latent qualities would somehow have been appreciated earlier. Miss Wallace loads the dice against Billy in his youth.

But these are reflections that occur to one afterwards, when the spell of Miss Wallace's intimate knowledge of the kind of people to whom Billy belonged has been withdrawn, when he is no longer ranging the woods or working in the Fair or risking his life as a Commando. (For it must be admitted that Miss Wallace's account of what happens to an invasion party on enemy soil seems, to the non-military reader, no less satisfying than her pictures of an agricultural community in Suffolk.) There are delightfully drawn minor characters: the lonely Saul Diggens, who manages the Fair, and Miss Brent, the respectable aunt of Billy's wife. (Perhaps Miss Wallace has a slight grudge against respectability?) Towards the end something evaporates from the book; I cannot say what, but the last chapters, exciting as they are, fail to hold one as do the earlier ones. Perhaps it is because (as the wrapper observes) the story has no moral, and Billy's death does not complete a pattern. I must add a word in praise of Miss Wallace's craftsmanship: this is a beautifully written book.

**Childhood in India.** The children in "The River" do not grow up, though before the end the serene, dreamy mystery of childhood is broken by the lightning and thunderstorms of adolescence. This is, in a sense, a cosmopolitan novel. India is Miss Rumer Godden's scene, her main characters are the transplanted English. At the same time, it gets it local habitation from the Indians, from the river, and from the garden with the poinsettias where Harriet and her two sisters played, and where Bogey, her brother, a lonely little boy, had his secret fantasy about the cobra. Victoria was too small to count much; Bea was growing up and had a still more advanced friend, Valerie: the two of them often made Harriet, the poet Harriet, feel small. In the background are the parents, the mother loving, sensible, determined to tell her daughters what they ought to know about life. And there is Captain John, a constant visitor, crippled in body and sick in mind, in love perhaps with Bea, but in his unhappy, irritable way, loving Harriet. The children are precocious in some ways and backward in others, but on the whole they are extremely convincing.

**Milestones.** The story changes and grows, but its main theme, I suppose, is Harriet's development. Milestones marking this are her first literary success, with a Calcutta newspaper (perhaps the least important); the tragedy of Bogey and the cobra; and the gradual rehabilitation (felt though scarcely realised by Harriet) of Captain John. Shadow and sunlight. The episode of Bogey and the snake is the most imaginative and subtly conceived thing in the book; mystery, menace, suspense and horror all contribute to an unforgettable effect; and the children's reactions, their partial awareness of what it all means, the slight indifference of their surface thoughts, the utter confusion and consternation of their deeper feelings, the change in their routine, the gap, the sense of loss, the gradual return to a life without their self-sufficient little brother, but with a new little sister—all this is described with an exquisite ear for under- and overtones.

The children's nurse is, to my thinking, too oracular; her sphinx-like utterances of ancient wisdom somehow do not ring true. But she is the only failure in a story for which success is almost too vulgar a word, so delicately does it move among the labyrinths of the imagination and on the high planes of the spirit.

**A Popular Period.** For some reason, perhaps the law of contrasts, the period of the Regency is very popular to-day; we like its brass and marble, its ebony and its tortoise-shell, we like its elegant and decorous turns of phrase. To these, more than to its concrete manifestations, Miss Georgette Heyer is exquisitely sensitive. Her prose may be a pastiche, but it does not read like one; people may never have talked as she makes them talk, but we only hope they did. They are light-hearted and spirited and amusing, even about the most serious topics—homicide, murder, and the very nasty knock on the head which the heroine sustains from an unseen assailant.

GEORGETTE HEYER, *primarily known as a romantic, historical novelist, produces admirable thrillers side by side with her other work. Her latest, "The Reluctant Widow," has the Regency period for background; is just published. In private life this author is Mrs. Rougier, wife of a London barrister; spends her time between her country place in Sussex and her chambers in Albany.*

Miss Rochdale, whose father had killed himself, leaving her almost penniless, was setting out to take a situation as a governess; but she got into the wrong carriage, and so into the wrong house: and, before she could turn round, the owner, Lord Carlyon, had persuaded her to marry his dying kinsman, Eustace Cheviot, whom Carlyon's hot-headed brother, Nicky, had wounded in a quarrel. Why he wanted her to do this I could not quite make out; but soon she found herself saddled with an inheritance badly encumbered by debts, a neglected old house, and a mysterious "situation" of which she understood little, save that it involved a secret passage and an unwelcome nocturnal visitor. Carlyon, an infinitely suaver Mr. Rochester, assures her that she is not in danger, but we cannot blame her if she does not believe him. The deceased Eustace's brother appears, a foppish young man apparently only concerned with his clothes and his health, a hater of dogs (Bouncer is one of the most vigorous characters in the book), in fact an unpleasant fellow despite his nimble and entertaining tongue; and suspicion (for this is really a spy story) soon fastens on him. Needless to say, Miss Heyer has other shots in her locker, and not until the last pages does the real inwardness of events declare itself. Lord Carlyon declares himself, too.

There is not much to say about "The Reluctant Widow" except that the author has lavished on it her very considerable talents, both for historical colour and for characterisation. It goes on oiled wheels, delighting the ear and the eye, taking little seriously except the art and study that have gone to its construction. Perhaps one ought not to ask more of any writer; yet I wish Miss Heyer would put her talents at the disposal of a more momentous theme.

**A Plodding Inspector.** The inhabitants of Nearbridge do not seem to have loved sensation, for the unexpected death of Iris Green provoked singularly little reaction. And when the even more mysterious death of her successor left the "situation vacant" once more, there was astonishingly little gossip. But seeing the quite remarkable similarity of circumstances between the two incidents, even a policeman might be pardoned for wondering if everything was above board. The local force decided that Scotland Yard was indicated and Inspector Arnold arrived. Perhaps he was needing a holiday; at all events, he was more than once very slow in following up clues and he missed some points that even a reader might notice. Mr. Clipsham observed in his journal that the Inspector was "a plodder content to acquire facts patiently without jumping to premature conclusions"; but if he does not plod a little quicker after his facts it will need more than Desmond Merrion's creative imagination to solve the problems which Mr. Miles Burton puts before him.

**BOOKS REVIEWED.**

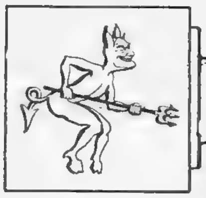
Billy Potter. By Doreen Wallace. (*Collins; 8s. 6d.*)
The River. By Rumer Godden. (*Michael Joseph; 7s. 6d.*)
The Reluctant Widow. By Georgette Heyer. (*Heinemann; 8s. 6d.*)
Situation Vacant. By Miles Burton. (*Collins; 8s. 6d.*)

*Contrast. Left is the Cycling Miss of 1896 as shown in the recent Trocadero Jubilee celebrations; all bloomered and gaitered to mount her penny-farthing bicycle; by her side a neat 1946 model in shorts and shirt, ready for the road.*

*Reality 1896: an advanced and purposeful woman taken from "The Sketch" of that year, all cluttered up with leg-o'-mutton sleeves and voluminous bloomers, primed to defy criticism and start on a cycling trip—a daring innovation.*

*And here the 1946 counterpart, standing by the bicycle of the future at the "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. No museum piece this. Her costume couldn't be slighter; and Mr. Bowden's streamline bicycle incorporates a dynamo and motor set which storing energy on the flat, releases power to provide uplift on the up-grades.*

# NOW AND THEN.



# TALES WITH A STING

## BECAUSE OF THE CURTAINS.*

By FREDA C. BOND.

THE other passengers left my compartment at the junction and a dim, misty little person got in. She seemed to merge into the dun-coloured fog which, even in summer, hangs wearily over that particular railway line. A girl in her late twenties, with her hair swathed in the inevitable scarf, a utility suit and unexpectedly good shoes. I was surprised that she should initiate a conversation. Something about the fog, and then about the haymakers in the marshy meadows beyond the junction. She had a pleasant voice, low-pitched and rather slow.

"I knew this stretch of country well, before the war," she said. "I never thought I would be coming back to it like this."

I mentioned that the country through which we were travelling was strange to me: I was going to a town some fifty miles farther on.

"Then you don't know Bassington? It 's the next stop."

I remembered having seen it from the line. A dreary little town. Pleasant enough a hundred years ago, no doubt, with a coaching inn and a street of Georgian houses, swamped now in a morass of yellowish brick and war-scarred concrete.

She brightened unexpectedly when I said that I didn't know the place. Nor did I know Bassington Hall, nor Mrs. Chilton—the Honourable Mrs. Chilton—who used to live there. It was clear that she was feeling the stress of some emotion: she was journeying into the past, and she wanted a fellow-traveller. I 'd do as well as another—better than some, since I had no connection with the *mise en scène*.

"It was a dear little place, Bassington, when we went to live there fifteen years ago," she said, "but, of course, it 's gone down."

Of course. Nothing ever goes up, does it? Something to do with Newton and the law of gravity, perhaps.

She, the girl—I never learnt her name—went on to explain that her father had taken a practice in Bassington; that was why the family had moved there: they 'd lived in Earl's Court before. A doctor? Well, no; actually, a dentist.

"I suppose you found it a bit slow, after Earl's Court?" I hazarded. "But I imagine you were still a schoolgirl in those days."

"There was a high school at Bassington. I went there. I 've not kept up with any of the girls, though. But I had one *great* friend in Bassington—well, outside, really: Bassington Hall. It was a lovely place! I wish you could have seen it. Cedars of Lebanon—enormous. And two tennis lawns. They had a billiard-room, too, and a library, of course. Books up to the ceiling. It seems a shame to think of it all cut up for building. Portal houses, too, they say."

"And your friend?"

There was no reason why the girl—nice voice, good shoes and all—shouldn't have been intimate with the household of the Honourable Mrs.—whoever she was. But, fifteen years ago, society in these little towns was still fairly strictly regimented: the Hall, last relic of "the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate," wouldn't normally have left cards on the dentist, newly-arrived from Earl's Court. Still—tennis clubs, amateur theatricals—there were plenty of ways in which the younger members of the families could meet.

In point of fact, she had met Diana Chilton at the confirmation class at the Rectory, her first year at Bassington, when she and Diana were both fourteen. They had been attracted to each other at sight. The chauffeur used to drive Diana the few miles to the Rectory, and after the first class, when Diana found that they were going in the same direction, she offered a lift. After that, she used to call for her on the way to the class, too. In a few weeks' time she 'd been to tea at the Hall.

"They really were kind, Mrs. Chilton and Di. Made me one of the family from the start. I used to count the days to the holidays! Because, after that Easter, the first year we were at Bassington, Diana was away at boarding-school. But we wrote, you know, every week—imagine it! I don't know what we had to write about, really."

What *do* schoolgirls write about? What do they talk about, arms entwined, walking round and round the shrubbery in the troubling spring twilights, with the thrush high on the cedar-tree, singing of something half-understood? What do they think about, hand linked in hand, sunk deep in the one-and-ninepennies at the Regal or the Majestic, while boy eternally meets girl, in London or Paris, Miami or New York, before their dazed and meditative eyes?

"Was Diana Mrs. Chilton's only child?" I asked.

"There was Cedric. He was older than Di. We didn't bother about him much. Well, not at first. And then it began to be rather fun—dances, you know, and tennis. Of course there was plenty of that sort of thing going on in Bassington, but it was different, out at the Hall. More—could you call it glamorous?"

Glamour. You wouldn't connect it with her: neat grey suit, a little too tight, mousy hair, unbecoming scarf. But it wasn't she, of course, who was glamorous. It was the Hall, the cedar-trees, the billiard-room, the library, with books up to the ceiling. A pleasant alternative to the out-of-date magazines in her father's waiting-room, a refuge from the smell of disinfectant on the stairs.

"Do you remember that Saturday?" she asked suddenly. "The day before war was declared?"

Did I not remember it! Moving in to London, against the tide of discreetly vanishing Londoners, to a flat whose walls were made of windows, with no curtains, with no black-out. We spent the whole day stitching curtains, and when dusk fell we walked on to the heath and watched the frantic, hurrying figures excavating sand by the unreal light of the arc lamps.

I said I did remember. I told her about the curtains.

"Curtains!" she said, and looked out at the misty fields, at the first hen-runs and bungalows of Bassington, just coming into sight. Her face grew a little vaguer, half-dissolved in a mist of reminiscence. "The day ended with curtains for me, too. And they always seemed—I 'm afraid you 'll think I 'm very fanciful—symbolic, somehow. Didn't somebody say, about the other war, 'the lamps are going out all over Europe'? I felt like that when Mrs. Chilton pulled the curtains——"

The curtains *were* symbolic. They closed, for her, the potentialities—billiard-rooms, libraries, chauffeurs to open the door of the car and tuck the rug around the knees, maids to bring the early-morning tea-tray—which Bassington Hall had revealed. A laburnum-tree, now, beside the gateway of the semi-detached—good-bye to the cedars on the lawn. Good-bye to cedars and Cedric.

The close of a period was re-enacted as the train crawled into the grimy station. There was to have been a party at the Hall, on the sixth of September, a party for Diana's twenty-first birthday. Just an intimate little dinner and a dozen couples to dance. There were to have been lanterns in the garden, a charming Edwardian memento of Mrs. Chilton's youth. There was glamour for you, glamour for the dentist's daughter! A new frock, made on a French pattern—as good, surely, by the light of the Japanese lanterns, as the gown from Isobel that Diana would wear. Cedric would be at home for the birthday; he 'd asked Diana to see that his seat at dinner was next to—well, I never heard her name. But by the first of the month it was doubtful whether the party would be held, and it was almost certain that Cedric wouldn't be there. Cedric was a subaltern in a line regiment and leave had been stopped.

They walked round and round the shrubbery, as they 'd done so many times before, the two girls in the breathless twilight of the Saturday before the war, talking of what they would do. Join the W.R.N.S., they thought. Diana had done so. She 'd gone abroad and, after she 'd been demobbed, she 'd married out East. She hadn't been back to Bassington since Christmas 1940, and neither had Cedric. They would never come back now. Cedric had been killed, soon after his last visit home, and now Mrs. Chilton was dead. It was a good thing, poor dear, that she 'd gone: she would have hated to see the land cut up for building. Apparently it had gone to the local council, by compulsory sale.

"She was pulling the curtains when I looked back at the house after I 'd said good-bye to Diana that Saturday evening. Black-out curtains. I never saw the lamp-light again, shining out on the hydrangeas, the way it used to do. I was glad when we left Bassington early in '41. Dad got an appointment in Birmingham and I got a job there, too. I didn't pass the medical for the W.R.N.S."

"And have you come from Birmingham to-day?"

No, she had come from a smaller town, not far from the junction where she had joined the train. She was married to a young dentist there (the dog-eared magazines, again, the telephone ringing as the soup was put on the table). They had a lower maisonette; not at all convenient and dreadfully shabby. She 'd wanted to have the paint-work a striking shade of blue, but the decorator wouldn't agree.

"I never meant to come back to Bassington," she said. "It 's no good brooding over the past, is it? But I had to come back. Because of the curtains."

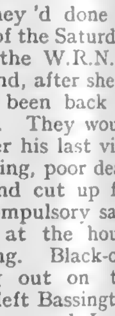
The train was jerking to a standstill. Under the echoing glass roof of the station faces took on a greenish hue. It was ridiculous, but for the moment I had the sensation that I was talking to a ghost. A ghost called back by the closing of the curtains that separated the dentist's maisonette from the life of the Hall, where subalterns sauntered out on the terrace, when lamp-light shone on the blossoming hydrangeas.

But ghosts don't carry umbrellas. The girl was groping for hers now, dropping her handbag, picking it up again, fumbling for the door-handle. She wasn't a ghost. Probably a sentimentalist obeying some impulse that impelled her to rub salt into the wound.

"Because of the curtains?"

"Oh, yes. There 's a sale to-day: some of the furniture and things at the Hall. A friend wrote me about it. We 're really so shabby now, the house is a disgrace. So I thought—if I could possibly get some curtains. They 've got good ones in the sale. Lino, too, my friend tells me."

Not a sentimentalist, after all.



THE END.

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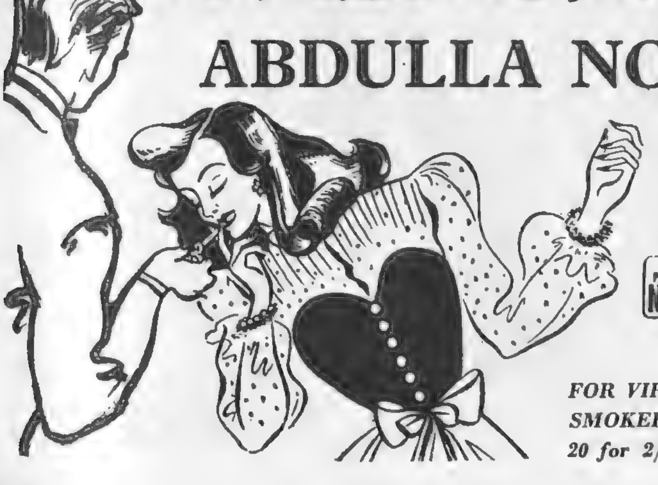


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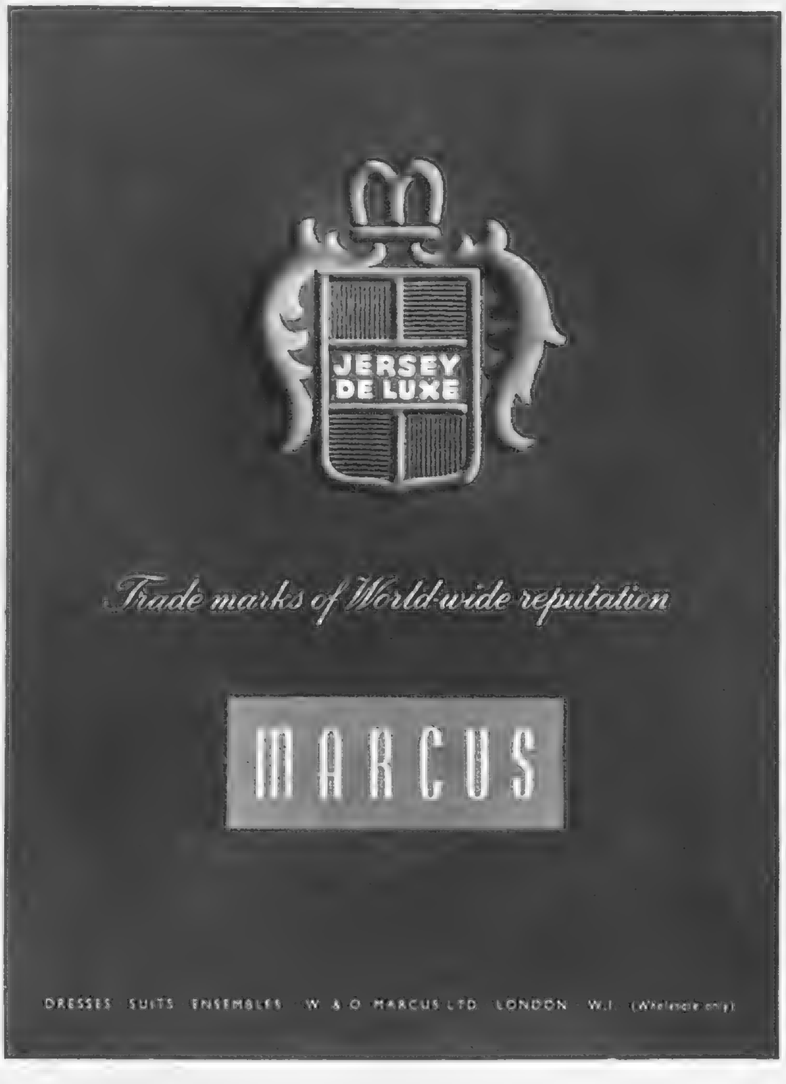

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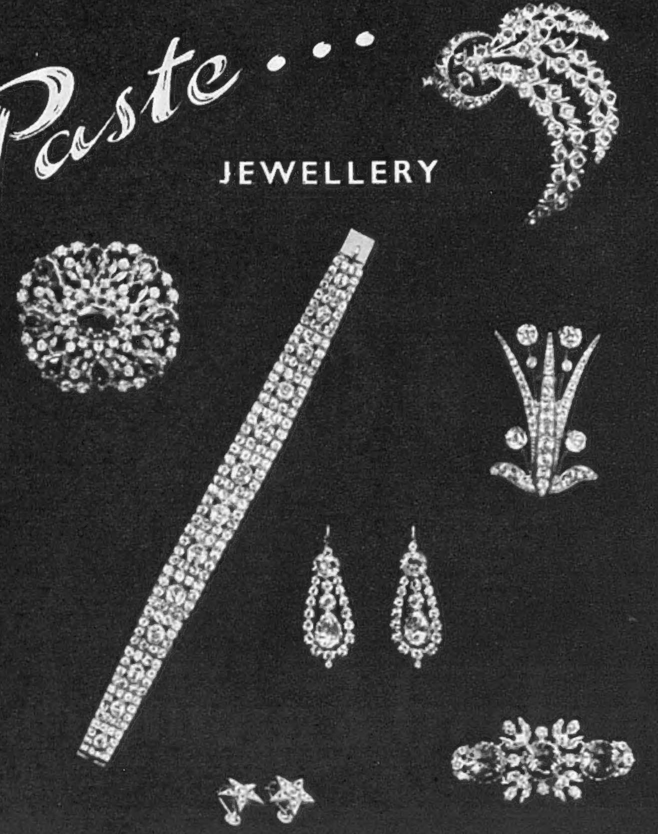

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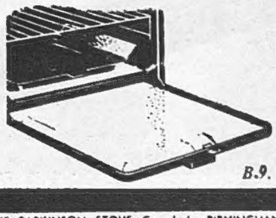

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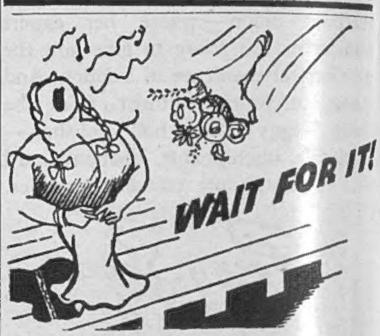

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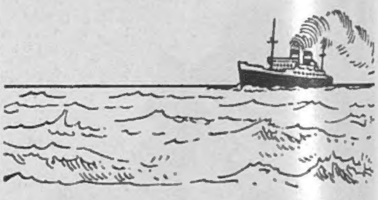

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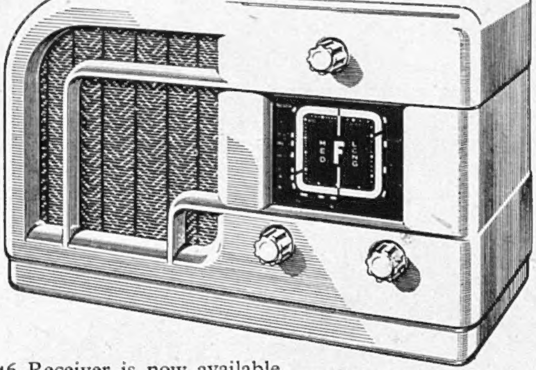

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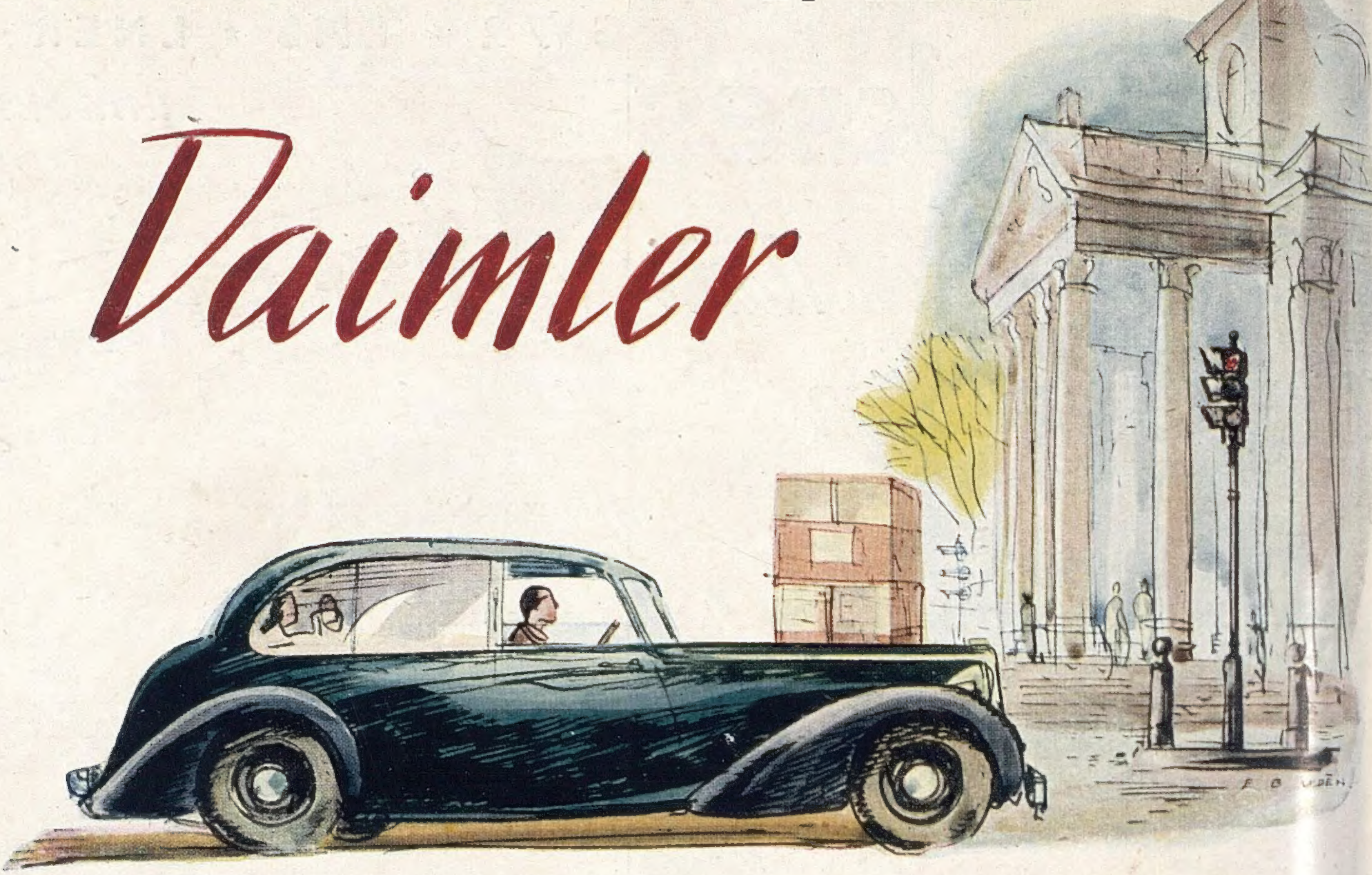

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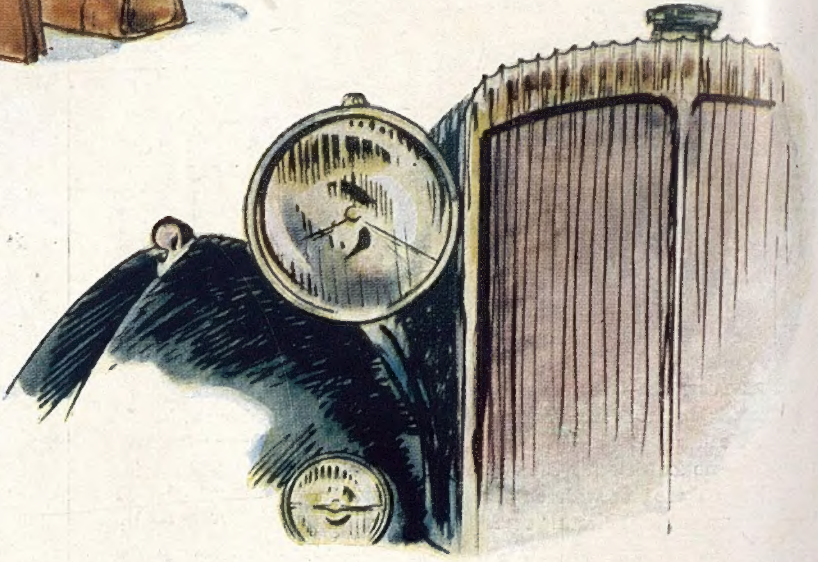

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